

To: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Date: 05 December 2023
Report of: Head of Housing Services
Title of Report: Building Safety & Compliance within Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Stock

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To inform members of the current Building Safety and Compliance Performance relating to the Council's housing stock.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member with responsibility:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028
Recommendation(s): That the Panel resolves to:	
1. Note and comment on the report and agree any recommendations.	

Introduction and background

- Oxford City Council has a housing stock of approximately 8,700 residential units. This is made up of the following housing types:

Property Type	Number
Flats	3642
Bungalows	380
Houses	4678

- The figures for flats include 717 leasehold properties.
- The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that these properties are safe to be used as residential accommodation.

4. Ensuring compliance with this duty involves inspection, servicing and maintenance on a number of building related elements in order to provide assurance that the residential units are as safe as they can be.
5. Building Compliance is increasingly considering building methods, construction type and component types such as ACM cladding and RAAC concrete as recent examples. With Building Regulation requiring confirmation of appropriateness of both existing material and that used in new build property.
6. The compliance elements vary according to the type of property, for example, we have compliance duties that will only apply to communal areas of flats and not in houses i.e. the requirement to carry out a fire risk assessment.
7. Key areas of legislation are:
 - The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
 - The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
 - The Building Safety Act 2022
 - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
 - The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
 - 'Legionnaires' disease. The control of legionella bacteria in water systems, (Approved code of practice L8)
 - Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER)
 - Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM 2015)
 - Building Regulations (all relevant parts and amendments)
8. Property Services manage the compliance activities across Oxford City Council's housing stock and are responsible for ensuring the Council remains compliant and reporting on this to the Executive and Members.
9. Property Services manages the key areas concerning all Council-owned Properties including: Energy & Sustainability, Technical Engineering, Data Knowledge, Surveying & Operational Service Delivery (Repairs & Maintenance) and Building Safety & Compliance.
10. The Building Safety and Compliance team manages areas which include Fire Safety, Water Management, Asbestos Management, Construction Design Management (CDM) and all other related Safety and Compliance items concerning the property portfolio.
11. The team currently consists of a Team Manager; two Building Safety Managers; CDM, Risk and Permit Officers; Fire Safety Support Officer; and an Asbestos & Water Management Officer.
12. A key function of the team in regard to Compliance is to ensure that all compliance inspections are carried out within the required timeframes and component elements (Gas Boilers, Electrical infrastructure, etc.) are inspected, tested and certified at all times.
13. Property Services manage these inspections via contracted services from both internal and external specialist contractors.

Building Safety Compliance Elements Currently Monitored and Reported On

14. **Gas Safety:** Monitored monthly by way of reporting the number properties by % with a valid gas certificate against number of properties requiring one. (Note: not all properties have a gas supply). We also monitor progress on Carbon Monoxide monitor installations.
15. **Electrical Safety:** Monitored monthly by way of reporting by % the number of properties with a clean inspection certificate against the number of properties requiring one (based on a 5-year inspection programme). Although the inspection frequency is not an absolute duty, the Electrical Safety Council advises 5-yearly inspections for rented accommodation and this is an accepted industry standard.
16. **Asbestos Management:** Monitored monthly by way of reporting by % the number of properties with an 'in-date' asbestos management survey against the number of properties requiring one.
17. **Fire Safety:** Monitoring various element inspections (fire alarm system, emergency lighting, extinguishers, dry risers, sprinklers etc.) these are reported on a % basis comparing the number of sites requiring the relevant inspection against the number that have received the inspection. Ensuring that all fire risk assessments required are carried out and any actions identified are implemented, again this is reported as a % of those properties with an 'in date' risk assessment. Actions are reported separately.
18. **Water Safety:** Monitored monthly by way of reporting by % the number of properties that require planned preventative maintenance (ppm's) and tank inspections as well as those with an 'in-date' legionella risk assessment against the number of properties requiring one.
19. **Lift Maintenance:** (Passenger Lifts and Domestic Stair lifts) monitored monthly by way of reporting the number properties on a % basis, comparing the number of sites requiring the relevant inspection against the number that have received the inspection.
20. **Lightning Protection Systems:** Monitored monthly by way of reporting the number properties by % with a valid inspection certificate against number of properties requiring one.
21. **Damp and Mould:** Monitoring of damp and mould cases is carried out in order to gauge impact and resource required as it is a relatively new process.

Performance Monitoring

22. The performance monitoring report is scrutinised and reviewed at the monthly Compliance Meeting, with key issues raised to the monthly Housing Review Group (HRG) and Quarterly Corporate Health & Safety Group.
23. Compliance performance year-to-date as of the end of October 2023 is summarised in the table below:

Compliance Element	Service Provider	Total number of sites	Number compliant	% compliant
Gas safe inspections	ODS (Internal partner)	6819	6819	100%
Electrical test & Inspection (5yr)	ODS (Internal partner)	7914	7041	89%
Fire safety inspections (alarms etc.)	Pyrotec (External partner)	311	311	100%
Water safety (ppm's, tank inspections, risk assessment)	SMS Environmental (External partner)	615	615	100%
Asbestos surveys and re-inspections	Asbestos Consultants Europe (ACE) (External partner)	615	615	100%
Lift servicing and maintenance	Cotswold Lifts (External partner)	Passenger – 16 Stair Lifts - 328	14 314	88% 96%
Lightning protection (annual inspection and maintenance)	Professional Technical Services Group (PTSG) (External partner)	10	10	100%

24. The above table reflects the Council's position on statutory testing and inspection programmes managed by Property Services. Overall, it is a good result year to date and is consistent with ensuring a compliant status throughout the year. Those programmes showing less than 100% are mainly due to access issues and these are proactively worked on to gain access with residents via the Resident Liaison Officers and our Tenancy Management Officers.

Current Health and Safety Related Work Project Programmes

25. The focus for fire doors in high rise blocks has changed dramatically since the Grenfell tragedy, with a greater emphasis on fire doors (communal and flat entrance) meeting modern standards. As well as this, the newly introduced Building Safety Act 2022 has made significant changes to the way fire safety is regulated in Higher Risk Buildings. The provision of compliant fire doors is a significant part of this regime, providing assurance to residents that their building is safe from a fire perspective.

26. As a result, a project is currently in progress to replace all flat entrance doors in our 5 Tower Blocks (over 18m) with solid timber FD30 doors, the project is around 40% complete and is being carried out by OCC's internal contractor Oxford Direct Services (ODS) and is due to complete in 2024. The communal doors were replaced in 2021.
27. Oxford City Council also commissioned a Fire Engineers inspection and report for the tower blocks which was completed this year (2023). This provided a greater understanding of the risks regarding Fire Safety in the high-rise blocks and actions required from it.
28. The key actions arising from the report are being worked through and addressed via the Building Safety Manager and the relevant contractors.
29. The project included, as key elements, replacement of all cladding systems with approved materials under the new regulations and guidance, installation of sprinkler systems and the replacement and upgrading of fire alarms.
30. Unfortunately, due to the quality issues with the cladding installation, the works are ongoing with remedial works required. OCC works closely with the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS), meeting regularly to discuss and review risk. OFRS have outlined on many occasions that they are very satisfied with the improvements to Fire Safety in OCC's High-rise blocks.
31. The Fire Service have stated that in their view the current position of fire safety in OCC's blocks is better than ever before, with non-combustible cladding, sprinkler systems and fire alarms installed through this project. Whilst the project continues to be completed, OCC is also looking forward to further improvements and additions including further upgrading of the alarm systems with controlled evacuation ability with OFRS. Funding for this is budgeted in 2024 when we expect to begin that project.
32. We are also working through actions identified from our fire risk assessments carried out on low rise blocks, putting together programmes of work for internal and external contractors.

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Concerns

33. There are a number of blocks which are being surveyed to ensure RAAC is not present, however based on guidance and advice it is unlikely that RAAC was used in the residential properties, but as stated we are checking the possible property types to be able to categorically indicate the non-presence of RAAC and provide assurance to residents.
34. The high-rise tower blocks are currently having a structural survey in progress and whilst RAAC was not specifically included in the survey commission, the structural engineering company (Stantec) have indicated that they believe it is not present.

Damp and Mould

35. In response to recent events, Oxford City Council has implemented a number of initiatives to identify and remedy damp and mould issues being reported by tenants. Property Services have recruited a damp & mould specialist surveyor and have a Damp and Mould working group from across the Council to ensure continued focus and solutioning of this problem. This has included various programmes via ODS and

specialist contractors for the installation of additional ventilation systems and other similar initiatives.

Summary

36. Whilst there are obvious areas of improvement required and further investment into our properties is needed due to the changing regulations and present challenges, the Council's Building Safety & Compliance is in a positive place. Property Services continues to develop programmes of work and projects to address any compliance needs.

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Background Papers: None
